

Leta Howard

From: MI RCRC <mircrc@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 30, 2011 2:49 PM
To: Leta Howard
Subject: Testimony to oppose SBs 612-614
Attachments: rrcrc testimony opposing SBs612-614.pdf

Dear Sir or Madame,

Unfortunately, I am unable to attend the Senate Health Policy Committee meeting on Thursday, Dec. 1st. I have attached testimony that I ask you to share with the committee members.

Please let me know if you have problems with the document or have any questions.

Thank you for your assistance.

Joy Whitten
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice in Michigan

On behalf of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Rights in Michigan, I urge you to oppose Senate Bills 612, 613, and 614.

We understand that there is no religious agreement on when life begins. We celebrate that this country was founded on the principle of religious diversity – where one set of religious views does not trump another's. We know that legislating among such diversity is challenging. However, this is why it is so important to leave very personal decisions to individuals and their own moral or religious values.

We understand that you work diligently to protect religious beliefs of all people. When doing so, please remember that when one set of religious beliefs starts to impede on another's that is no longer religious liberty, but intolerance.

This religious liberty is a cornerstone to our democracy. We are concerned that SBs 612-614 have adverse religious implications. Rabbi Amy Bigman, one of our members, writes, "Judaism respects a fetus as a *potential* life, and places a very high priority on protecting it; however, the *existing* life of the mother takes precedence over the fetus. As such, there are circumstances in which a threat to a woman's life not only permits, but requires, an abortion. [*Ohalot* 7.6] There is no choice in this matter; the mother's life must be saved. All Jewish authorities agree on this." Rabbi Bigman and her colleagues fear bills such as SBs 612-614 that restrict medical decision-making of doctors and women, could lead to situations where Jewish women would be forced to violate *halacha* [Jewish law]. This, we believe, is contrary to the religious liberty principle.

Secondly, we believe that, as morally autonomous persons, women are entitled to make medical decisions concerning their health and reproductive lives, according to their faith and conscience as well as on factual, sound, safe and compassionate medical advice.

Politicians should not tie doctors' hands when they need to determine what is best for a women's medical situation.

Also troubling for we the faithful, is that these bills disproportionately affect low-income women. To deny affordable or any access to health care services, especially in this economic climate in Michigan, is mean-spirited and contrary to most religious beliefs to be compassionate to those in need.

Finally, we believe that the best way to prevent the need for abortions is to prevent unintended pregnancies by improving access to education and health care. If the Michigan Senate is so concerned with reducing unintended pregnancies, and thus the number of abortions, we urge you to support commonsense policies such as those outlined in the Prevention Package.

Once again, please oppose Senate Bills 612-614. Thank you for your time.